

Health of Home and School

LEAFLET NO. 18.

Issued by the State Department of Health of Maine.

Vital Statistics; Uses and Value.

The boy was born fifteen years ago or more. His parents thought they named him James Nelson and they call him Jimmie. But his name in the records of the town clerk is Joseph Nelson. Now the question is, has Jim or Joe a legal name? If he has what is it? And who is he? And how can he in the future identify himself? His parents came from Canada, but Jimmie was born in Maine, and on that point the record is correct. But the official record says that the birth occurred seventeen years ago. Nevertheless he is considerably under that age. Now such a mixup in the record may be bad for the boy. There are quite a number of unpleasant things which may happen to the boy later in life because of these blunders in the record.

Some Things Which May Happen.

Some things in the future which may trouble this boy and result in expense or loss may be gathered from the following statements of troubles which have actually befallen other persons because a correct record of a birth or a marriage or a death had not been made.

A young man was lately a candidate for office in Maine. His parents came from Canada. He was born in Maine, but his birth was not recorded. His political opponents claimed that he was not a citizen of Maine and thus made trouble for him.

A young man from Maine was a candidate for appointment on the police force of Boston, but his birth had not been recorded. Trouble again.

Another young man from Maine in the employ of the mechanical department of one of the railway companies of Massachusetts was caused much trouble because he could not get proof of the time and place of his birth which he was required to furnish. His parents had failed in their duty to their child in that no record of his birth had been made.

Another man from Maine had received an appointment to a government position and was distressed because he was required to furnish proof of age and nativity. No record of his birth had been made.

A seventeen year old boy, born in Kansas, went on a visit to the earlier home of his parents in the old country. Returning he was held up as an immigrant at the port of New York and deportation to Europe was threatened. He was held in New York until, after much trouble, the midwife who attended at his birth was found and a record of his birth was made by his city clerk seventeen years after the date of his birth.

An American couple wished to be married in Germany. The marriage could not take place there because no public record of their births was available.

A senator of the legislature of Maine said it cost one of his elients \$50 to get proof of his marriage because no record of the marriage had been made.

A young man and his wife came from Switzerland and settled in this country. The father was killed by accident. The mother struggled on, making for herself and child a scant living, with wash-tub and needle. Word came that the child's uncle in Switzerland had died, leaving \$12,000 to the issue of his brother. But parents and physicians were both guilty of neglect in not having a record of the birth of this child made. The physician was dead. The certificate of birth could not be produced and the refusal of the Swiss government to turn over the money was a cruel disappointment to the deserving and needy mother and child.

As this leaflet is in preparation a clerk of a Maine town writes that he is called upon to furnish a birth record of a lady 70 years old, born in his town, but now living in England. She needs a record of her birth to enable her to get an old age pension, but no record can be found.

Other Uses of Vital Statistics.

Official records of births, marriages and deaths are often required to determine the right to attend school, to enter certain occupations or to be exempt from certain occupations as under the child labor laws, to vote, to marry, to hold or dispose of property, to employment in military or civil service, responsibility for crime or misdemeanor, exemption from jury or military duty, qualifications or disqualifications for certain public offices, to dispose of claims for insurance by proper evidence of the fact and the cause of death, for the purpose of settling pension claims. The pension officers are continually calling for proofs of births, marriages, or deaths, and deserving claimants cannot furnish required evidence because proper records were not made.

These are some of the reasons why it is important that there should be an accurate record of every birth, marriage and death. There are, however, other reasons: as an aid in tracing the cause of sickness and of death and the prevention of disease; for the educational value of vital statistics, and, from the genealogical point of view for their aid in writing the histories of families and of nations.

Advice to Parents.

There are two reasons why parents should be sure that accurate records are made of every birth, marriage and death which occurs in their families. The first is that it is in the interest of the family to do so, and the other reason is that every good citizen should wish to comply with the requirements of the law. Even if the physician says that he will report the birth to the clerk of the town or city, be sure that he has done so, and be sure also that the record has been made correctly, and then be sure after the child is named that the name is correctly recorded. Look up the record and if an error is found have the town clerk make the correction as is provided in the law of 1913. It will cost nothing to have it done and may save much trouble for you or yours.

The duty is upon parents as well as upon physicians to report births to the town clerk within six days, and the law does not release the parent from this duty until the names of the children have been reported to the clerk. (Blanks for reports of births or deaths may be had from town clerks or by addressing: State Registrar, Augusta, Maine.)

Intentions of marriage must be recorded by the town clerk five days before the certificate of marriage is granted. Intentions of marriage must be recorded in both towns when the parties to the proposed marriage have a legal residence in different towns.

In the case of deaths the undertaker, householder, neighbor or other person removing a body or supervising the burial shall furnish the town clerk with a certificate giving the facts called for in the blank certificate of death, including the certificate of the physician as to the cause of death, and it is the duty of the physician promptly to make out the certificate of the cause of death and have it ready, and not wait to be asked for it.

On the presentation of this certificate of death a "burial permit" will be issued by the town clerk.

This burial permit must be returned to the town clerk of the town in which the death occurred within six days after burial.

The law makes it the duty of town clerks and of the State Registrar to enforce this law relating to the registration of births, marriages and deaths.

The penalty for wilful neglect or refusal to perform any duty imposed by this law is a fine of not more than one hundred dollars for each offence.

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LEAFLET NO. 19.

ISSUED BY THE STATE BOARD OF HEALTH OF MAINE.

The Danger From Lead Water Pipe.

The work in the Laboratory of Hygiene in finding dangerous quantities of lead in samples of water from homes in which the family physician has found symptoms which have made him suspicious of lead poisoning has strongly emphasized the danger from lead poisoning in families using water which flows or is pumped through lead pipe.

In the histories of chronic lead poisoning from this source in this State and elsewhere two notable observations are often made:

One is that a given water may for years be conducted through lead pipe meanwhile dissolving only very slight traces of lead and then, for some cause or other, becoming loaded with dangerous quantities of lead.

The other is that among the several members of a family all using the same lead-polluted water, one person only or only a part of the members become affected so as to present marked or serious symptoms. It would appear that different individuals have very varying degrees of susceptibility to the action of lead.

Symptoms.

The symptoms which result from the long-continued taking of small quantities of lead may be very obscure, simulating those due to many other causes and raising no suspicion of lead poisoning.

Serious conditions of ill health may develop without colic and some other symptoms which are commonly looked for as typical of lead poisoning. The lead-line on the gums is not invariably present. The symptoms usually are a combination of some of the following:

Pallor of the face with, in some cases, a grayish-yellow hue, emaciation, weakness, shortness of breath, and the appearance of premature senility.

Indigestion, loss of appetite, the abdomen not usually bloated; continuous and often very obstinate constipation, though diarrhoea is sometimes a prominent symptom; even when no colic appears the pain in the gastric region and abdomen is sometimes so continuous as to suggest malignant disease. The lead-line and severe constipation are pretty sure to be well marked in cases in which lead colic has supervened.

Often an increased tension of the pulse, and frequently some of the other pathologic conditions are present which go to make up a serious disease of the arteries, which ends the life of many persons past middle age. Some of the symptoms present are disturbance of the heart's action and shortness of breath.

Disturbance of the renal function, often quite marked. Muscular pains and pain and swelling of the joints, which are usually thought by the patient to be rheumatic. In some cases gout is closely simulated. The pain is usually worse at night.

Headaches, neuralgia and sometimes neuritis, weakening or paralysis of muscular action, interfering with walking or the free use of the hands; muscular tremor; neurasthenia; cerebral symptoms and convulsions in children.

In some cases there has been a very marked improvement in the health when the patient has discontinued the use of water which has been shown to contain lead. In other cases in which the diseased conditions have gone far or have existed long, recovery is slow or only partial.

Histories of Cases.

The following condensed histories of cases of poisoning from water with traces of lead in it will help to illustrate the characteristics of the symptoms.

Case 1. A man only 38 or 39 years of age, yet he presented marked symptoms of premature aging. Could not sleep in bed; had to sit up nights. He had laryngitis and lost his voice. Lead poisoning was suspected. The sample sent to the Laboratory was found to contain lead. After getting the water supply from another source, he improved greatly in every way.

Case 2. Mrs.....had been troubled with numbness of the arms for a long while especially at night. Since the water supply was found to contain lead and the water supply was changed the numbness of the arms has entirely disappeared and the general health of the family has improved.

Case 3. A man 54 years old. Chief symptoms were colic, constipation, weakness of all the muscles, lost 10 pounds in weight, some tremor and numbness of the hands. Marked improvement after discontinuing the use of the lead-polluted water.

Case 4. A young woman. She was very pale, somewhat emaciated and quite weak. Severe lead colic with blue line on the gums. Vomited considerably and was constipated. There was marked improvement after abandoning the lead polluted water supply.

Case 5. Home bought eight years ago. The water supply was pumped through 64 feet of lead pipe. The mother had a severe attack of neuritis and was weak. The two boys had frequent attacks of stomach-ache, as they called it. The lead pipe was finally removed and an iron pipe substituted. Since then, the attacks of lead colic, as it appears to have been, are becoming very rare.

Case 6. In a general way, one Maine physician relates as follows his observations of cases which seem to be due to lead poisoning. All or nearly all had more or less nervous symptoms, some in one way and some in another. Nearly all complained of heart, short of breath, etc., though I could find no organic trouble. All had a good deal of trouble with the stomach; most of them had no desire for food though one or two wanted to eat all the time but lost strength and felt sick; constipation the rule, though diarrhoea in one or two cases; more or less vague pains in the muscles resembling rheumatism, muscles stiff and sore.

Case 7. A physician writes that in one family without doubt the father has lead poisoning. He has the blue line on his gums, constipation, etc., but the most important symptom is nervousness which at times almost amounts to insanity. He also has much pain in the joints and has taken rheumatic medicine without getting relief. Other members of the family are well although they have all drunk the lead-polluted water.

Amount of Lead Surface.

In some instances serious lead poisoning has developed when the piece of pipe through which the water came was very short. In one severe experience with lead poisoning, the trouble came from an old lead clock-weight which was found in the bottom of the well. On the other hand, water sometimes comes through many feet of lead pipe without producing symptoms. There is less danger, though not always an absence of harm, when the water is constantly flowing through the pipe.

Lead Poisoning Among Animals.

In one instance where the human dwellers on the premises suffered from lead poisoning, three head of stock were lost in one winter, and at another home where there were cases of lead poisoning, the water killed the chickens, so the doctor thinks. In another Maine home where lead pipe was the cause of poisoning to the members of the family, a valuable driving horse developed weakness of the hind legs and of his back, "went all to pieces," as the owner expressed it, and had to be killed. These fatalities among animals are merely suggestive; but other observations on the effects of lead-polluted water seem to indicate that an unthrifty condition and colic **may** be the result of watering animals with such water.